



Fire at Whiskeytown

Whiskeytown National
Recreation Area

Supplement



Firefighters, Fuels and Fire Come Together



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THERE IS NO QUIET SEASON FOR firefighters at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. Crews work year round to reduce the threat of wildfire. Whiskeytown firefighters actively suppress unwanted fires, save lives and property, and reduce hazardous fuels that can lead to catastrophic fires. The fire crew also shares its knowledge and participates in educating the public about wildland fire.

After the devastating wildfires of 2000, Congress authorized additional funding to fire programs to reduce hazardous fuels near rural communities. This additional funding has helped Whiskeytown reduce hazardous fuels in the park and along its boundaries. Crews work daily thinning, chipping and cutting brush throughout the park. Whiskeytown has built and maintained an extensive shaded fuelbreak system throughout the park. These shaded fuelbreaks consist of areas where forest fuels have been removed. Mature trees like pine and oak are left to provide shade. Shaded fuelbreaks are located in strategic areas, along ridgetops and roads. These fuelbreaks will help to slow a fire down and provide access for firefighters to fight the fire.

In November 2001, Whiskeytown completed the 720 acre Sunshine prescribed burn. This prescribed burn is the first significant burn Whiskeytown has completed in three years. The Sunshine burn was an interagency project to help reduce the threat of wildfire to Old Shasta and west Redding and will enhance the effectiveness of fuelbreaks already in place.

The Fire and Resource Management Divisions are busy updating the park's fire management plan. This plan outlines Whiskeytown's fire goals for the next 10 years. Because of Whiskeytown's complex fuels, sensitive resource issues and adjacent communities, the park is writing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This is an intense project that involves staff from many different fields of expertise. The staff is involved with public scoping sessions and research on how fire and fuel reduction projects will affect park resources. The EIS should be completed in 2002.



Top Page Photo: The Sunshine Burn was part of the Wildland Urban Interface Initiative to help reduce the threat of wildfire to communities that are near Whiskeytown's boundaries. **Above Photo:** Firefighter uses a drip torch to ignite vegetation on the Sunshine Burn.

In addition to fighting fires and reducing hazardous forest fuels, Whiskeytown's fire crew and staff are committed to educating park visitors on the role that fire plays in our forest.

Throughout the year the fire crew participates in education programs on wildland fire. Every Saturday during the summer the crew participates in the Junior Fire program by teaching kids about wildland fire in our National Parks.

Fire is a hot topic and how it is managed in the years to come plays a very important role in the health of the valuable resources the National Park Service is responsible for protecting and preserving now and for the future.

Become a Junior Firefighter



If you are between 7 and 12 years old, you can become a Junior Firefighter at Whiskeytown and earn a National Park Service Firefighter Patch. Discover the role that wildfire plays in our National Parks. Learn how firefighters manage fire to protect property, lives and ensure forest health.

You can earn a Junior Firefighter patch by attending the Junior Firefighter Program on Saturdays at Oak Bottom Amphitheater from 11:00 am –12:00 pm during the summer or ask at the Visitor Center about other ways you can become a Junior Firefighter.

**CALL 911 FOR ALL
EMERGENCIES**

Being Fire Safe is Everyone’s Responsibility

Although fire is an important process in the ecosystem, it can also be a source of destruction and devastation. Each year, the build up of fuels, extreme weather conditions, and human causes result in destructive wildfires. Millions of tax dollars are spent fighting undesirable and difficult to manage fires. Imagine losing your home or a loved one to a fire. Many of these fires are human caused and therefore preventable. Preventing unwanted fires is everyone’s responsibility.

Whiskeytown would like your help in preventing undesirable fires. Any fire that is a threat to people, property or the environment will be suppressed. In order for human caused fires to contribute to the health of the ecosystem they must be carefully planned. Unplanned fires may damage sensitive habitat and negatively impact visitor experiences. You can help us prevent unwanted fires by making your home, as well as Whiskeytown, “fire safe.”



In 2001, Whiskeytown responded to 17 local fires, including the East Fire in French Gulch.

FIRE PREVENTION AT WHISKEYTOWN:

- ☛ Practice safe campfire techniques. Use an established fire ring and keep water and a shovel nearby to extinguish the fire. Keep all burning materials well inside the fire ring. Keep all unused firewood well away from the fire.
- ☛ Never leave a fire unattended and be sure that all fires are dead out before leaving.
- ☛ If you smoke, keep safety in mind. Properly dispose of cigars and cigarettes and make sure they are completely out before throwing them away. Never throw a cigarette butt from any vehicle; you may think it’s out, but it may not be. Don’t risk it and besides - its litter!
- ☛ Use caution when operating portable cooking devices like camp stoves.

- ☛ Be sure children know how dangerous fire can be. Tell them not to play with matches or lighters.
- ☛ Carry a fire extinguisher in your car, boat, and RV.

FIRE PREVENTION AT HOME:

- ☛ Check your smoke detectors. Keep them in clean working order.
- ☛ Maintain at least a 30-foot clearance around your home. Clear any debris, rake leaves and pile wood away from your home.
- ☛ Clear 10 feet away from your chimney. Install ½" fireproof screens on your chimneys and stovepipes to prevent airborne ash and particles from starting a fire.
- ☛ Clear your roof of any flammable materials and consider installing a fire resistant roof.
- ☛ Teach children about fire. Establish escape routes and a meeting place in the event of a fire at your home. Post emergency numbers by the telephone. Be sure children know how to use 911.
- ☛ In the event of a fire get out quickly. Crawl on your hands and knees to avoid the smoke. Wait at your family’s meeting place. If needed, use a neighbor’s phone to call 911.

Contact a ranger if you see any suspicious or unsafe fire practices. It is up to each of us to keep Whiskeytown fire safe. Report any smoke you might see.



How Fire Safe Are You?

There are many causes of fire, but there are also many ways to prepare yourself as well. How prepared are you? Take this quiz and find out!

- 1. A good way to prepare your home for fire season, is to:**
 - a.) Stack piles of trash in the backyard
 - b.) Surround the house with rocks and concrete
 - c.) Prune out dead branches and remove old leaf litter from around your home
 - 2. You should remove ladder fuels, the shrubs under tall trees because:**
 - a.) They make it difficult for a firefighter to use a ladder
 - b.) They serve as a link between the grasses and the tree tops which could carry a fire through your home or property
 - c.) They are ugly
 - 3. If there is a fire in your home what should you do?**
 - a.) Hide in your room
 - b.) Quickly crawl out of the house and wait at your family’s meeting place
 - c.) Look for your valuables
 - 4. You should have ____ escape routes from every room.**
 - a.) Zero
 - b.) One
 - c.) Two
 - 5. Why should you clear thirty feet around your home?**
 - a.) Thirty feet helps to stop the spread of fire to your home and allows firefighters an area to work safely.
 - b.) Clearing around your home makes for a more natural landscape.
 - c.) To get a better view
- Answers: 1.c, 2.b, 3.b, 4.c, and 5.a

CALL 911 FOR ALL EMERGENCIES

Fire - A Natural Process for Healthy Forests

Most people have been taught that fire is an enemy to the forest. We see blackened trees, bare soil, and worry that animals and their homes may have been destroyed. These are some of the reasons that people have worked hard to put out every fire, in every forest possible. Unfortunately, we are beginning to understand that by putting out every fire, we have actually increased the risk to the forest by allowing excess plants to build up. We refer to these accumulated plants as forest fuels. When wildfires ignite in our forests today, we often see greater destruction because the excess forest fuels allow the fires to burn at higher temperatures, for a longer period of time.

Fortunately, fire does not always burn in a way that is destructive to forests. Before people were able to successfully control wildfires, the forest was shaped by many natural events, including fire. We know this because people have studied the record of past fires that are contained within the rings of living and dead trees, which show old scars from fires that burned the tree in the past, but did not kill it.

Sugar pine, ponderosa pine and Douglas fir are protected from fire by thick bark that insulates the living cambium layer of mature trees. This allows adult trees to survive many fires, and when a fire does occur it often provides suitable conditions for new seeds from these trees to germinate.

Tree rings from ponderosa pine and Douglas fir show that fires occurred in our region on an average of once every thirteen years.

Fire is a natural force that has helped shape our forests. Lightning started many fires at Whiskeytown. Over long periods of time, many plant species and forest communities became adapted to fire.

Fire causes important changes in the forest. It creates openings in the canopy, allowing more sunlight to reach the forest floor. Grasses and flowering plants grow, flourishing in the full sunlight without competition from other vegetation. These plants provide food for animals like deer that browse on the young vegetation.

Openings created by fire also result in structural diversity within the forest, providing different habitat types that are occupied by a wider range of plants and animals.

Frequent small fires reduce the accumulation of surface and ladder fuels. Surface fuels are the living and dead plants that are on the forest floor. Ladder fuels are the shrubs, small trees, and



Firefighter ignites the surface fuels which will help reduce the threat of wildfire in the area.



Crews working on shaded fuelbreaks.



Prescribed fires mimic low intensity fires and consume forest litter, duff and shrubs.